



Telling the Story of Health and Health Care in Canada

In 2022, the *Museum of Health Care at Kingston* launched a planning process to renew its strategic plan with a bold vision and four main priorities to guide the direction of its activities over the next three years and beyond.

This plan was approved by the board in June 2023, and is supported by the museum's annual operational workplans, which are documented separately.

Museum of Health Care Strategic Plan 2023-2026



The Past is Prologue

First conceived in 1988, the *Museum of Health Care at Kingston* was born in 1991 when it began acquiring medical and general health artefacts from across Canada. The collection now includes more than 35,000 artefacts.

The museum relocated to its current home in the former nursing-student residence at Kingston General Hospital in 1995. The historic Ann Baillie Building is a beautiful 1904 Beaux-Arts style limestone structure and National Historic Site commemorating the history of nursing education in Canada.

The Museum strives to preserve the material history of our medical and healthcare past with the goal of enhancing understanding of the history of health and health care, particularly in Canada. The Museum also serves as a primary resource for scholarly work in the history of health care.

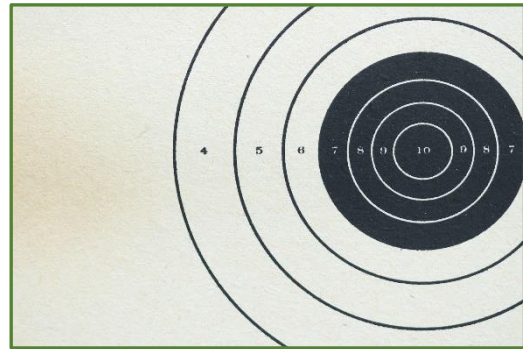
Through careful restoration and adaptation of its historic home, the *Museum of Health Care* continues to expand its exhibitions, collection development, research, and education programs. In addition to its online resources, Museum galleries are located both in the Ann Baillie Building and in a network of Outreach Galleries in healthcare centres in Kingston.

The Museum is a non-profit corporation and registered charity and has had a Board of Directors since 1996.

Situation Analysis:

Strategic Landscape & Forces for Change

This plan responds to a number of trends, significant pressures and expected changes in the operating environment:



- **The museum is at an inflection point** in its own history, transitioning from a founder-led operation inspired by a visionary leader, Dr. Jim Low, to becoming a leading storyteller of Canada’s health and healthcare history. With the new vision comes a need for further development of the organization and its operational infrastructure.
- **Status quo is not an option:** the museum’s current operating model, funding, resources, staffing capacity, collections, programming, infrastructure and positioning are not expected to be sustainable “as is” over the long term.
- **The museum has a unique opportunity** to share its pre-eminent health and healthcare collections with national and international audiences. That said, an ambitious vision must be pursued within available resource capabilities.
- **Given risks associated with expansion,** the museum prefers to grow beyond its current base in incremental steps, protecting its ability to deliver on its core mandate and managing risks that have led other museums to founder.
- **A stable, long-term funding model must be developed** if MHC is to attract funding, donations, staff, partners and other support to sustain a challenging place of learning offering pre-eminent national resources in Canada.
- **Future decisions on location and space** represent critical strategic choices that will shape the museum’s evolution. Its current location and spaces constrain programming opportunities, collections and access to learning — the museum needs to consider adapting its current facilities as well as options for other locations (existing or purpose-built facilities). Its long-term status as a tenant in a KHSC building is another uncertainty and/or risk.
- **A more mature governance model, organizational structure and additional human resources** will be required to support positioning the Museum of Health Care on the national landscape.
- **Respect for Indigenous peoples together with accessibility, equity, diversity and inclusion for all** continue to be priorities for strategic and operational planning.

Measures of Success

While measures of success at a high level would be focused on progress towards achieving the *Museum of Health Care* vision and fulfilling its mission, more detailed metrics or key performance indicators will be incorporated into the annual workplans to support these strategies.

Reporting mechanisms for monitoring progress will also provide the board with ongoing insight and oversight for implementation of the strategic plan.



A Vision for the Museum of Health Care

To be an inspiring museum and thought-provoking place of learning that offers pre-eminent national resources for those intrigued by the fascinating insights to be learned from the history of health and healthcare in Canada. We connect communities in conversation.

What This Means in Practice:

- As a museum, MHC interprets the material evidence of our cultural practices for learning and insights into health care past and future. Its approach builds upon a traditional focus on collections, exhibits and education programs.
- The museum serves as a resource centre (not as a research centre).
- MHC will expand its active digital presence and engaging online resources, programs and services.



What This Means in Practice (continued):

- The Museum of Health Care will be based in Kingston but connected nationally.
- It will continue to be an independent entity while maintaining close partnerships with other museums, networks and institutions. It will develop a new national advisory council and network of closely associated experts.
- It will be responsive to issues of equity, diversity and inclusion together with goals for accessibility and reconciliation with Indigenous communities.
- The organization is moving from a founder-centric working board model to a more mature policy governance model as a non-profit corporation with national ambit.
- It will have a stable long-term financial platform supported by a mix of revenue sources (philanthropy, endowments, sponsorships, grants and government funding).
- In step with growing resources, the museum will secure space adequate for its growing needs (e.g. exhibits, educational tours, tourist and group visits, collections, cataloguing, storage, IT, administration, staff spaces, etc).
- The museum's future location(s) will be assessed against the criteria of wherever best fits the vision/mission, not necessarily a healthcare site.
- Brand positioning will evolve dynamically over time as the museum aligns itself with others in the sector, especially nationally, and adjusts how it offers value in response to future visitor interest and funding support.
- Over time, the museum will reconstitute the Executive Director role and expand its staff complement to incorporate and/or connect with expertise in medical history, fundraising and marketing communications.
- The vision includes being recognized as an employer of choice with strong administrative, human resources and professional development practices.

Our Mission Statement

The Museum is an entrusted steward caring for the material evidence, significant history and evolving story of health and health care in Canada.

Its functional mission is to acquire, conserve, research, display and interpret artefacts in ways that inspire wonder, share knowledge and promote learning about that history and what it means for the future.

A Framework: How We Fulfill our Mission

- We engage our local and on-line communities with imaginative programs that stimulate discussion, while providing enjoyment and connection.
- Our health care collections, held in trust for the people of Canada, form the basis for our exhibitions, events, research, and collaborations.
- We believe that understanding why health care is the way it is; how different it was in the past; and how it could change in the future matters to us all.
- We accept the challenge to explore the prejudices and assumptions behind health care practices in the past and present.
- We offer our communities a healthy space to explore what it means to be human in body and mind.

What is a Museum?

From the International Council of Museums (ICOM) – August 2022

"A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability.

They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing."

Our Primary Stakeholders:

The Museum of Health Care at Kingston serves a variety of stakeholders within a network of learners, supporters, funders and partners. These include:

Visitors and Learners:

- Digital visitors and audiences.
- On-site visitors (tourists, conference goers, business visitors, local residents).
- Students and other educational visitors.
- Researchers, teachers and information-seekers (film makers, media, writers).

Supporters and Partners:

- Funders, foundations, government and other granting programs.
- Individual donors, members and volunteers.
- Other national museums or strategic partners having a connection with health history.
- People working in or directly connected to the healthcare sector.



Core Values that Guide Our Way

We stand by these core values:

Every organization has certain non-negotiable values that are part of their “core DNA” — values that are personal, deeply ingrained and by which the organization would stand, even if it had to “suffer” for them.

In addition to general values that all reputable organizations embrace, the *Museum of Health Care* places particular priority on the behaviours in its organizational culture that demonstrate these pivotal values:



- **Respect**

This pivotal value is all-encompassing, including respect for the dignity and differences of individuals, health disciplines and sectors, cultural practices and histories of different eras and places. It incorporates honouring Indigenous peoples as well as accessibility, equity, diversity and inclusion for all as cornerstone principles guiding daily decisions on representation, education, collections, stories, programming and partnerships.

- **Stewardship**

As trusted leaders responsible for resources of national significance, our board members, staff and volunteers are ever-conscious of their role as stewards of the organization itself, its core commitment to education and lifelong learning, its collections, financial and human resources, and the precious foundation of professional integrity and ethics in all its dealings.

- **Service Excellence**

The role entrusted to the museum is best performed with a continuing emphasis on quality and innovation, a lean operational focus emphasizing simplicity over complexity, together with clarity of purpose, communication and collaboration.

Strategic Directions for MHC 2023-2026



Anchor MHC locally; grow to connect nationally

If the museum is to take its place on the national stage, it must build on its excellent collection to extend museum infrastructure, brand positioning, funding relationships and partnerships to serve new and larger audiences across Canada.

Supporting Objectives:

Also see related enabling strategies for funding, staffing, space and evolving governance for taking the museum to a national level.

- **Pursue an incremental, multi-prong development strategy:**
On one hand, this reflects practical constraints, requiring *an iterative approach* to growing financial/human resources and expanding scope in steps. On the other, it strives for advancement in local, provincial, national, international and digital spheres of operation *in parallel*, not sequentially.
- **Invest in supporting the museum's evolving brand and positioning:**
This objective identifies the effort needed to clarify the museum's evolving brand identity, a new case for support, and how it will live up to its aspirations. This extends beyond communications, visual identity and promotion — it also speaks to “performance before publicity”, including experiential and programming elements, collections, staffing, partnerships, expertise, and supporting infrastructure needed to be a “player” nationally.
- **Build national networks in support of the museum:**
In practice, this means: Develop relationships with philanthropic donors and funders at the national level. Resurrect a national advisory council of experts on the history of health and health care. Connect with other leading museums and educational institutions as partners and mentors.

Measures of Success:

- Accomplishment of specific milestones identified in annual workplans.
- Enhancement and growth in visitor interactions, financial support, human resources, partnerships and meaningful profile as a museum.



Enhance platforms for performance.

Before (and as) the *Museum of Health Care* reaches for a meaningful role as a resource centre with national reach and scope, it must first have its house in order. This strategy speaks to organizational infrastructure and support needs.

Supporting Objectives:

Also see the separate enabling strategy for financial and human resources.

- **Optimize spaces and location(s) to meet MHC's ongoing needs:**

Develop a long-term action plan to reconcile the museum's current and future needs with alternative options to optimize its location and spaces for visitation, programming, collections and administration.

This goal applies to digital spaces and capacity as well, but primarily includes a focus on improving current spaces, confirming the landlord's lease commitment, and exploring opportunities for better space(s) to support museum operations (size, suitability, climate control, ease of visitation, parking, visitor amenities, meeting spaces, offices and brand).

- **Reduce collection backlogs; refresh exhibits and programs:**

Before stepping up to share pre-eminent collections on the national stage, the organization must first take action to be fully "ship shape" for growth. Constraints on funding, staff and volunteer resources (as well as space) have left some work unfinished. The museum has plans to refresh exhibits and programs, minimize backlogs, tidy up databases and storage areas, update the website and digital technology, and clarify policies (e.g. the intended scope of "health care" remains to be defined, and may change over time).

- **Redesign and transition to a new organizational structure:**

As MHC prepares for growth, it must plan for transition from local working board to a policy governance structure with national perspective. Growth will also require new staff roles and reporting structures (re-establishing the Executive Director role, for example, but it also applies to capacity and expertise specific to health care history, technology and fundraising).

Measures of Success:

- Accomplishment of specific milestones identified in annual workplans.



Secure resources needed for stability & growth

This plan identifies the need for a new model to secure financial and human resources in support of long-term museum stability and expansion of programs. It builds on the founder-led approach of the past and the support of long-time member-donors (what might be called a “heartfelt connector” model).

The aspirations of the MHC vision require a broad, energetic and sophisticated effort to raise funds through individual philanthropic gifts, public funding and grants, donations in-kind, partnerships and earned revenue. In turn, the steady flow of these resources will enable expansion of programs, growth of staff and improvements in the museum’s collections, infrastructure and marketing.

Supporting Objectives:

- **Develop a focused, pro-active fundraising plan and capabilities:**
Develop a strong case for support and detailed fundraising plan that identifies worthwhile opportunities and prospects, ways to connect with them, and the infrastructure/system to steward these relationships.
- **Design a long-term talent management plan to support the vision:**
In addition to providing a compensation framework and professional development opportunities for current staff, the museum must develop and implement a longer-term plan for organizational development, a pipeline of prospects, recruitment, retention and talent development.
- **Pursue opportunities for strategic partnerships aligned with vision:**
Success in accomplishing the museum’s vision and mission will depend on contributions from and alliances with strategic partners, national experts, tourism operators, other museums, educators and suppliers.
- **Enhance and expand community relationships and support.**
The museum remains anchored in the Kingston region and will leverage its significant relationships and collaborative support in the community.

Measures of Success:

- Building the specific capabilities needed to meet realistic targets for a stable baseline of resources needed to fully achieve the long-term goal of becoming a museum for the 21st century with a national footprint.



Reposition the brand, marketing & communications

A brand goes well beyond a visual identity — it represents what an organization stands for and what it means to its priority stakeholders. It is supported not only by marketing, promotion and communications, but also by performance and the experience of engagement or interaction with the organization. As the vision for the museum expands, so must the brand evolve.

Supporting Objectives:

- **Refresh the museum’s brand identity while building on the past:**
The evolution of MHC’s brand strategy will be reflected in the case for financial support, the experience visitors might expect on-site and online, as well as communications, marketing and stakeholder engagement.
- **Pursue performance before publicity:**
The value and credibility of what the museum has to offer is derived from its unique, pre-eminent collection of health and healthcare artefacts. That value is delivered through learning experiences. This objective involves a careful review of strategy, optimal allocation of resources, and shoring up operational capabilities to deliver on the museum’s vision for the future.
- **Become equally comfortable with both digital and on-site programs:**
The pandemic led the museum to find opportunities and appreciate the importance of serving stakeholders with digital tools, from online presence to interactive learning experiences on-site and the growing influence of AI. This objective involves a balanced re-orientation to incorporate digital services and approaches along with traditional modes of print, physical and on-site delivery of information and experiences.

Measures of Success:

- Measures of how stakeholders perceive, value and relate to the Museum of Health Care’s brand identity as it evolves towards the vision.
- Concrete progress re: operational milestones for collections, physical and online spaces, educational programs and service infrastructure.

Implementation Framework and Timelines



Strategy is activated through *operational plans* that provide more specific direction for the work and identify responsibilities and timelines — detailing who will do what by when.

The museum's senior management, staff, board members and volunteers will implement these strategies through specific workplans that respond to the organization's future challenges and opportunities, translating the priorities outlined above into ongoing activities and initiatives.

- Note that these interconnected initiatives all influence one another during implementation — they may overlap, advance through different stages with varying timelines, and many will be on-going.
- The MHC Board will have its own unique responsibilities and accountabilities with respect to building out the future policy governance model.
- The priorities focused on development of organizational capacity and resources are likely to receive more attention in the early stages of plan implementation, since they are critical to enabling the others.
- Best practices in the areas of change management, capacity building, fundraising, talent development, community/partner relationships and policy would also be part of plan implementation at the operational level.
- A successful roll-out of this strategic plan will depend on effective two-way communications and related efforts to develop understanding of its implications — both by internal audiences at the museum as well as by visitors, funders, members and community partners.
- As with any well-managed implementation, progress on these strategic priorities will be reviewed regularly. Operational plans will be updated when necessary (as will the strategic plan itself, as appropriate from time to time as conditions change).

This will help ensure the organization continues to anchor its activities in its mission and vision, adapt to the latest evidence and best practices, and respond effectively to circumstances as they may change through 2026 and beyond.

APPENDICES:

Implementation Stages & Timelines:

1. **Stabilize the current operation**, get “ship-shape” before growth, and build out planning.
2. **Develop organizational capacities** — funding, space, staff, structure and relationships to “go national”.
3. **Execute the transition** to “pre-eminence” in well-planned and supported steps.

1. **Getting “ship-shape” for growth (2023-2024):**

- Reduce backlogs, focus/simplify operations, and open up time for planning and fundraising (e.g. reducing collection backlogs, de-accessioning, database cleanups, website updates, refreshing exhibitions, space workarounds etc).
- Design, explore/test and build capacity for a new model for financial sustainability.
- Explore ways to deal with current space issues; investigate better future options.
- Decide on the organizational design to succeed the founder-dependent model.

2. **Building our capacities (2023-2025):**

- Operational (collections, exhibits, education, administration)
- Location, space, parking, facilities, visitor amenities, equipment, technology
- Fundraising, grants, sponsorships & other revenue sources (e.g. earned revenue)
- Marketing communications and brand development/strategy
- Staffing/volunteer resources and expertise
- Board governance model, recruitment & development
- Networks and strategic partnerships

3. **Executing the transition (2024-2026):**

- Evolve in incremental steps (in size, scope, networks, geography, financial resources)
- Plan for close management of the risks (especially the “jump” to truly national)
- Develop a crystal-clear vision and how best to offer value; energetically promote it.
- Relationships & reputation by association (networks, partners & high-profile supporters).
- Action related to staffing, space/location, board development & other capabilities.



Thanks to all those who contributed to development of this strategic plan:

CURRENT & PAST BOARD MEMBERS

- Ian Gemmill (Chair)
- Oyedeji Ayonrinde
- Karen Humphreys Blake
- Brian Devlin
- Bill Hunter
- Jim Kennedy
- Peter Milliken
- Felicity Pope
- Eleanor Rivoire
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